



Minutes

Finance & Resources Committee

Date: 12 July 2013

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Birkenshaw

Present: Councillor B Smith (in the Chair), P Caffrey, J Dodds, P Harrand, A Hussain, M Shaw, G Thornton, C Townsley, A Wainwright (as substitute for Councillor J Cummins), A Wallis (as substitute for Councillor M Khan) and G Wilkinson

In Attendance: N/A

Apologies: Councillors J Cummins and M Khan

1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Committee at a meeting held on 25 January 2013 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

2 URGENT ITEM – FBU STRIKE ACTION BALLOT

The Chair had agreed to a verbal report from the Chief Fire Officer about the very recent announcement from the Fire Brigades Union advising that it would be seeking to undertake a ballot of its members for strike action. The item would be considered as an exempt item at agenda item no. E11 (Min no. 11 refers) under Paragraph 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

[The item had been approved on the grounds of urgency due to the timing of the announcement].

3 ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items of business specified below as it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public and press were present during these items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of the descriptions specified.

AGENDA ITEM NO.	TITLE OF REPORT	MINUTE NUMBER	Description of exempt information by reference to the paragraph number in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972
E8	Purchase of Command Unit Lite	8	Paragraph 3 - financial or business affairs
E9	Technical Services and Old Gym – refurbishment	9	Paragraph 3 - financial or business affairs
E10	New Rothwell Fire Station	10	Paragraph 3 – financial or business affairs
E11	FBU – Ballot for Strike Action	11	Paragraph 4 – Labour relations, consultations or negotiations

4 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of disclosable pecuniary interest made in any matter under discussion at the meeting.

5 QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REVIEW

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report which presented an overview of financial performance of the Authority for the first quarter of the current financial year. The report provided information on revenue and capital expenditure, treasury management and debtors and creditors.

The Chief Finance Officer advised Members that there was a projected underspend in the revenue budget taking the following issues into account;

- Dispensation on precept (additional £2.9m generated per annum)
- Salaries (underspend of £0.9m)

It was reported that expenditure patterns had yet to develop and therefore other revenue budget projections were difficult to make. Revenue balances were forecast to be £12.6m at 31 March 2014.

A five-year capital plan of £45.4m had been approved at the February 2013 meeting of the Authority which included schemes to the value of the £13.709m for the current financial year. Members were advised that a number of schemes had not been completed during 2012 – 13 which had increased the capital plan to £16.307m. The Director of Strategic Development briefed Members on progress with the purchase of sites identified in the Integrated Risk Management Plan as follows;

- Rastrick – recently received notification of rejection of permission for judicial review of the granting of planning consent by Calderdale Council
- Killingbeck – final stage of negotiations with Leeds City Council, detailed design stage
- Dewsbury – final purchase negotiations, detailed design stage
- South Kirkby – change to original planning application due to additional conditions required by Wakefield Council associated with drainage of site
- Menston – in negotiation with site owner (Yorkshire Ambulance Service)
- Ossett (2012 IRMP) – site searches continued with only one currently suitable. Initial design work commenced.
- Shipley – discussions ongoing with Bradford MDC for a suitable site
- Weetwood – in discussions with site owners for a number of potential sites

Detail of capital schemes approved by Management Board to a maximum value of £100,000 was included as an annex to the report now submitted.

Treasury Management issues were reported including an overview of the economic position, interest rates, borrowing, investments and banking. No new long-term borrowing was foreseen for the current financial year.

It was further reported that the Authority was due to receive the pensions grant from Government (£26m) in the near future and Members raised questions relating to Authority investments, rates of interest, District Council lending.

Members were further advised of the current position with regard to debtors and creditors for which £22,927 of debt was at recovery stage (debt greater than 60 days).

Notice was also given of the initial Government announcement of the next round of spending cuts which would impact on this Authority with an anticipated reduction in budget between 7.5% and 10%.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be noted;
- b) That the revised revenue budget be approved; and
- c) That the revised capital plan be approved.

6 CO-OP BANK – UPDATE ON FINANCIAL POSITION

Members received a report of the Chief Finance Officer which provided an update on the Co-operative Bank's most recent credit rating which had been substantially downgraded in May and June 2013.

The bank was not used by the Authority for investment purposes as it did not meet the relevant criteria but Members were advised that it was used for day-to-day operational banking (daily cleared balances for which were kept as close to zero as possible). The Chief Finance Officer reported that he was examining contingency plans in the event of a collapse of the bank.

It was reported, however, that the Authority's financial advisers did not currently recommend any change to the use of the Bank and were keeping the situation under constant review.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7 ANNUAL UPDATE OF INFORMATION GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which provided an annual update on the implementation of Information Governance arrangements and reported on progress made towards the introduction of an Information Management System (ISMS) for the Fire Authority.

It was reported that progress continued and the self-assessment results had been underpinned by external audit which had given the process a grading of "substantial assurance".

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8 PURCHASE OF COMMAND UNIT LITE

(The item was considered as exempt information under Schedule 12A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 – Information relating to financial or business affairs).

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Delivery which advised of the process undertaken for the proposed replacement of a second Command Unit with a new Command Unit Lite (CUL) and which sought approval for its funding.

Members were reassured that, with any new large-scale capital investment, both options of leasing arrangements and direct purchase were considered.

RESOLVED

- a) That the establishment of a project to deliver a new Command Unit Lite be noted; and
- b) That approval be given to the funding of the CUL project from Section 31 monies received for the delivery of the Enhanced Logistics Support (ELS) capability.

9 TECHNICAL SERVICES AND OLD GYM – REFURBISHMENT

(The item was considered as exempt information under Schedule 12A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 – Information relating to financial or business affairs)

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which sought approval for the refurbishment of the existing technical services building (following fire damage in 2012) and of the old gymnasium building at Fire Service Headquarters to allow for the creation of a new IT suite and relocation from the Control Centre which would become surplus to requirements.

It was reported that the value of the schemes had been included in the approved capital plan in January 2013.

RESOLVED

- a) That approval be given to the refurbishment of the existing Technical Services building following the fire damage; and
- b) That approval be given to the refurbishment of the existing gymnasium to allow for the re-allocation of the IT Suite.

10 NEW ROTHWELL FIRE STATION – CONSTRUCTION

(The item was considered as exempt information under Schedule 12A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 – Information relating to financial or business affairs)

Members received a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which sought approval for the construction of a new Fire Station on the existing site at Rothwell.

It was reported that the current station was beyond economic repair and the new station would comply with new design requirements with a projected start date of early 2014.

RESOLVED

- a) That approval be given to the demolition of the existing deteriorated Fire Station building at Rothwell and construction of a new building meeting modern design standards on the same site;
- b) That approval to be given to a revision of the capital plan to increase the value of the scheme as detailed in the report now submitted;
- c) That approval be given to the capital expenditure as detailed in the report for the construction of the new Fire Station at a) above; and

- d) That it be noted that Planning Application and Building Control approvals would be necessary to progress the scheme.

11 FBU – BALLOT FOR STRIKE ACTION

(The item was considered as exempt information under Schedule 12A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 – labour relations, consultations and negotiations)

The Chief Fire Officer took the opportunity to provide Members with a verbal report on the implications of the strike ballot in response to which contingency plans were being developed.

Chair